

New Tesla software to offer 'full' autonomy, Musk says

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Tesla founder and Elon Musk says an update to the carmaker's Autopilot software will enable "full" autonomous driving features

An update to Tesla's Autopilot software coming in August will enable "full self-driving features" for the automaker's electric cars, chief

executive Elon Musk says.

Musk's comments come amid a race by automakers and tech firms to roll out fully autonomous vehicles, but also rising concerns about the safety of robotic systems.

The Tesla founder made the disclosure in a Twitter conversation, responding to a user who complained about issues with Autopilot, which is currently considered semi-autonomous with the requirement that a motorist be at the wheel at all times.

Musk said the updated "Version 9" coming in August would help address a number of issues.

"To date, Autopilot resources have rightly focused entirely on safety. With V9, we will begin to enable full self-driving features," he said.

Musk offered no details about the system, which could accelerate the effort to put more self-driving cars on the roads in the United States.

Federal safety investigators have been looking into a series of accidents, including at least two fatal ones, involving self-driving cars.

Musk has complained about the focus on accidents, arguing that self-driving systems are likely to be far safer than human drivers.

"It's super messed up that a Tesla crash resulting in a broken ankle is front page news and the (approximately) 40,000 people who died in US auto accidents alone in past year get almost no coverage," Musk said last month.

The National Transportation Safety Board said in a preliminary report last week that a Tesla operating on Autopilot sped up before a crash into

a freeway barrier in California that killed the driver.

In another fatal accident last year, Tesla's Autopilot failed to detect a truck crossing the road, but investigators pointed out the driver was watching a movie at the time and not paying attention with the semi-autonomous system in operation.

After an Uber self-driving vehicle earlier this year killed a pedestrian in Arizona, investigators said the automatic braking system had been disabled.

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